14:International Bank S-5 (1954)1955 MD1 Syria MD1

Natural Resources

Land and water are undoubtedly the principal natural resources of Syria. Indications do not point to extensive mineral deposits. Some poor lignite but no coal has been found. A subsidiary of the Iraq Petroleum Company carried out extensive prospecting and drilling over a considerable area under a concession granted in 1938. After spending about £ 6 million sterling in exploratory work, it surrendered its concession in August 1951. Although the belief persists in Syria that considerable oil will one day be discovered, there is no evidence to support the supposition. Drilling did reveal the presence of natural gas in eastern Syria, southwest of Hassetche, and also of appreciable quantities of rock salt. In theory this gas, if proved in considerable volume, together with salt, could provide the raw materials for the production of fertilizers and alkalis, but other countries—for example Iraq—may well be more favorably situated with respect to the development of similar resources. The natural gas could also be used as a source of energy but it is unfortunately found at a considerable distance from the potential market in western Syria.

There are important deposits of bitumen or asphalt. One of these, in the province of Latakia, is already being mined, but other and far richer deposits uncovered in the Djebel Bichri, west of Deir ez Zor, are being exploited to a minor extent only by the Ministry of Public Works. The latter deposits are expected to assume considerable importance in the extensive roadbuilding program the government is planning to undertake. Iron ore, chromite and lead and iron pyrites are known to exist, but their presence in commercial quantities is still to be proved. While licenses for prospecting of minerals are being issued, on the basis of existing evidence it seems unlikely that mineral resources exist in sufficient quantities to affect the future of Syria significantly.

Agriculture

Syria is predominantly an agricultural country. Between 65% to 75% of the people derive their living directly from agriculture, and a considerable portion of the balance earn their livelihood by handling or processing agricultural commodities. Agriculture and animal husbandry together probably account for 45% to 50% of the national income. In agriculture, winter crops are most important because rainfall is concen-

29:Dunn S-4 (1952)1952 MI Middle East
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COTTON IN SYRIA

Cotton in the past two years has become Syria's most important export. The country also exports wheat, barley, and other cereals, apricot paste, olive oil, wool, some cotton textiles, licorice root, tobacco, pistachio nuts, and livestock products.

Many types of manufactured articles are imported—petroleum products, minerals, pharmaceuticals, electric appliances, motor vehicles, machinery, tires, tubes, glassware, and hardware.

Table 20

SYRIA: Specified Exports as Per Cent of Total Exports
March 12 through December 31, 1950
Value

Item	1950
	Per Cent
Cotton	28.6
Wool and Hair	11.1
Silk, Artificial Silk, and Textile Fibers	6.0
Vegetables and Products	37.5
Animals and Products	6.6
Tobacco	1.3
Hides and Skins	1.1
Others	8.4
Total	100.0
Total Value Converted to Millions of Dollars	59

SOURCE: United States Department of Commerce.

Table 21

SYRIA: Exports to Specified Countries as Per Cent of Total Exports
1951
Value

Country	1951
	Per Cent
Lebanon	21.5
France	18.2
United States	13.5
Lebanon Free Zone	8.2
Iraq	7.3
United Kingdom	7.0
Others	24.3
Total	100.0
Total Value Converted to Millions of Dollars	79

SOURCE: United States Department of Commerce.

PRODUCTION

Syria is essentially an agricultural country. Its mineral resources have been exploited only slightly despite indications of the existence of phosphate, lead, copper, antimony, nickel, chrome, and gypsum. Manganese ore has been

29:Dunn S-4 (1952)1952 MI Middle East
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316 mined since 1914, and sodium chloride and bitumen deposits also are being worked. There is an abundance of good calcareous building stone and basalt.[29]

433 The most important industries produce flour, olive oil, soap, tanned hides, tobacco products, glass, alcohol, glucose, and textiles. New factories recently constructed include two cottonseed oil mills, two cotton spinning and weaving mills, porcelain and glass factories, and a beet sugar mill. Textiles is the most important single industry from the standpoint of employment and value of production.

315 Unlike many of the other countries in the Middle East, Syria has no oil in commercial quantities. A number of wells have been drilled, but without notable success. A pipeline from Iraq and the Persian Gulf crosses Syria to the Mediterranean, and a new line is being completed to Baniyas on the coast from Iraq. The pipelines provide a source of employment, but they do not produce a large amount of revenue for the government.

Table 22

439 SYRIA: Specified Imports as Per Cent of Total Imports
March 13 through December 31, 1950
Value

Item	1950
	Per Cent
Textile Materials	29.1
Combustible Minerals	10.2
Electric Machinery and Apparatus	10.7
Common Metals	6.8
Precious Stones and Metals	5.8
Animals and Products	5.7
Others	31.8
Total	100.0
Total Value Converted to Millions of Dollars	90

SOURCE: United States Department of Commerce.

Table 23

SYRIA: Imports from Specified Sources as Per Cent of Total Imports
1951
Value

Source	1951
	Per Cent
United States	18.2
United Kingdom	12.8
France	10.4
Lebanon	10.2
Italy	7.0
Germany	5.5
Others	35.8
Total	100.0
Total Value Converted to Millions of Dollars	138

SOURCE: United States Department of Commerce.

[29] *Development of Food and Agricultural Resources in the Near East*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1951, p. 92.